

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: ETRD, IN, NP, BG
SUBJ: BANGLADESH/INDIA TRANSIT AGREEMENT OPENS
NEW ROUTE TO THE SEA FOR NEPAL

REF: (A) KATHMANDU 1265, (B) KATHMANDU 1551,
(C) NEW DELHI A-67, (D) DACCA A-036

SUMMARY. BANGLADESH AND INDIA SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDER-
STANDING AUGUST 14 FOR USE OF A RAILWAY ROUTE ACROSS THE
THIN STRIP OF INDIAN TERRITORY WHICH SEPARATES NEPAL AND
BANGLADESH. THIS LONG-AWAITED AGREEMENT MAKES POSSIBLE
REGULAR TRADE BETWEEN NEPAL AND BANGLADESH. IT ALSO MAKES
AVAILABLE TO NEPAL A SECOND TRADE ROUTE TO THE SEA VIA THE
BANGLADESHI PORTS OF CHITTAGONG AND CHALNA. PREVIOUSLY
CALCUTTA HAS BEEN THE SOLE TRANSIT POINT FOR NEPAL'S OVER-
SEAS TRADE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, WHICH TAKES EFFECT
SEPTEMBER 15, WAS SIGNED IN DACCA BY S.B. CHOWDHURI,
BANGLADESH ADDITIONAL SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE, AND G.S.
SAWHNEY, INDIAN ADDITIONAL FINANCE SECRETARY, AFTER FOUR
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DAYS OF TALKS. IT CALLS FOR PERIODIC CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN
BANGLADESH AND INDIAN OFFICIALS. BDG MINISTER OF COMMERCE
SAIFUR RAHMAN HAILED THE AGREEMENT AS A "MAJOR STEP" IN
REGIONAL COOPERATION.

2. THE AGREEMENT COMPLETES A TRIANGULAR SET OF TRADE
AND TRANSIT AGREEMENTS AMONG BANGLADESH, INDIA AND

NEPAL: THE BANGLADESH/NEPAL TRADE AND PAYMENTS TRANSIT AGREEMENTS OF APRIL 2, 1976, REF (D) WHICH ESTABLISHED THE FRAMEWORK FOR BILATERAL AND TRANSIT TRADE BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES, AND THE INDIA/NEPAL TRADE AND PAYMENTS TRANSIT AGREEMENTS SIGNED MARCH 17, 1978. REF (C) THE LATTER AUTHORIZES THE USE OF INDIAN TERRITORY FOR TRADE "WITH AND THROUGH BANGLADESH" SUBJECT TO SUBSEQUENT ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH. THE AUGUST 14 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING COMPLETES THESE ARRANGEMENTS.

3. THE AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR THE USE OF THE INDIA RAILWAY LINE WHICH TERMINATES AT RADIKHAPUR IN INDIA ON THE BANGLADESH BORDER NEAR THE TOWN OF BIRAL ON THE BANGLADESH SIDE IN DINAJPUR DISTRICT. IT DOES NOT INDICATE WHICH POINT WILL BE USED FOR ENTRY AND EXIT TO NEPAL. POSSIBLE POINTS COULD BE REUXAL, GOLGOLIA AND JOGPANI RAILWAY STATIONS NEAR THE NEPAL-INDIA BORDER. THE USE OF INDIAN ROAD LINKS BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND NEPAL IS NOT COVERED IN THE AGREEMENT AND IS REPORTEDLY THE SUBJECT OF SEPARATE NEGOTIATIONS. ACCORDING TO DACCA PRESS REPORTS THESE ROADS ARE NOT SERVICEABLE IN ANY CASE AT THIS TIME. CUSTOMS FORMALITIES ARE DESCRIBED IN THE EARLIER AGREEMENTS BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL AND NEPAL AND BANGLADESH.

4. AS REPORTED IN REF (D) BANGLADESH AND NEPAL HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRANSPORTA-
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TION AND WAREHOUSING OF NEPALESE EXPORTS AND IMPORTS WHICH TRANSIT BANGLADESH, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE AGREEMENT WITH INDIA WHICH MAKES THIS POSSIBLE. NEPAL WILL REPORTEDLY ESTABLISH A LIAISON OFFICE IN CHITTAGONG NOW THAT THE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN SIGNED.
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